

April 13, 2005- Week Two of Gas Price Crisis

WEEK TWO OF GAS PRICE CRISIS

-Leftover Energy Bill Would Not Lower Gas Prices-

WASHINGTON, DC - During the House Committee on Resources markup of the Republican Energy Bill, U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) voiced his disapproval of the reintroduced Republican legislation which does little to help families afford skyrocketing energy bills and gasoline prices, while padding the profits of big oil conglomerates.

"This bill does a disservice to hardworking West Virginians," said Rahall. "Aside from a provision to study and help to achieve North American energy independence, what I see here is little more than another pity party for Big Oil and I just cannot shed any more tears."

It is now the second week of the gas price crisis in West Virginia after gas prices hit record highs across the state on Tuesday, April 5th. The Republican Energy bill is up for discussion this week, while the rising gas prices continue to gouge the pocketbooks of West Virginians and Americans across the entire country. While Republicans are claiming the Energy bill will help lower gas prices, the Bush Administration's own Energy Information Administration analyzed the bill and concluded it will do nothing to lower gasoline prices.

Rahall has repeatedly called for an investigation into the possibility of price fixing by the big oil companies. The Administration has refused to investigate this possibility, while companies like Exxon are enjoying record profits and receiving massive tax cuts.

"Big Oil is hitting the taxpayer not once, not twice, but three times," Rahall said. "They are hitting them at the pump. They are hitting them at the Treasury through the tax code. And now they are hitting them with more relief contained in the Energy bill we will consider today. Meanwhile, people back home stand in their work boots, pumping costly gas into their tanks, while energy lobbyists are back again, on bended knee, in Armani suits, wanting more."

Rahall has been a longtime supporter of American energy independence. He has consistently advocated new fuels, such as coal based liquid or gaseous fuel. "Coal is America's most abundant natural resource, and we know all about it in West Virginia, but this Energy bill focuses on handouts to foreign oil instead of supporting the coal industry in southern West Virginia," said Rahall. "A good energy bill would utilize our Nation's coal supply."

In an effort to put forth a comprehensive and responsible national energy policy, Rahall introduced language that rejects the Majority's proposal and inserts a plan that allows energy development, empowerment, and endowment.

The Democratic alternative is rooted in the belief that, if Congress puts American know-how to work to address our energy needs, it can find ways to provide energy while promoting quality of life for American families and preserving American treasures for future generations.

The proposal also reauthorizes the Abandoned Mine Land program which is responsible for cleaning up abandoned mining sites that pose the greatest risk to health and human safety, while increasing the amount of interest accruing to the unspent balance in the fund that provide health care benefits to retired mine workers and their widows.

"Congress must reaffirm its commitment to coal mining communities that fueled America's Industrial Revolution and solidified its position as a world leader," Rahall said.

According to Rahall the energy bill lacks budgetary sanity and does not contain even a hint of an interest in the health, safety, and well-being of the citizens of energy-producing communities like southern West Virginia.

"I cannot support this flawed Energy bill," Rahall concluded. "I only wish we could stick it back in the fridge with the rest of the doctored-up leftovers from past Congresses."